

FORM B – BUILDING

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

12-63F Orleans G EAS.34
LHD 5.12.1986, NRDIS 3.2.2001

Town/City: EASTHAM

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Old Town Center

Photograph



Address: 1 Preservation Way

Historic Name: Joseph and Lurana Smith House Barn

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Agricultural - Barn

Date of Construction: ca. 1835

Source: Title research, vital records

Style/Form: No style/ Half Cape (result of later conversion to dwelling)

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Stone

Wall/Trim: Wood clapboards, wood shingles/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
None

Major Alterations (*with dates*):
Addition (late-20th c.)

Condition: Good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.59 acres

Setting: The house is situated on the State Highway amid dense roadside development comprised of historic properties, more recent summer cottage development and civic and commercial buildings. The driveway is accessed from Preservation Way which loops north of this parcel. The house is partially obscured from State Highway by a stockade fence. The parcel slopes down to Minister Pond.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant, for

Organization: Eastham Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): April 2025

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☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The Smith-Brewer Barn, built ca. 1831, is a 1 ½-story, side-gable former barn that was converted to a dwelling with a Half Cape form. A one-story addition with two windows on the front elevation and a saltbox roof on the rear elevation is a late 20th-century addition. Any chimneys on the main roof have been removed, a chimney rises from the side ell, and skylights have been added to the main roof. The three-bay front elevation of the main block contains an entrance close to the northwest corner and two widely-spaced windows. The rear elevation contains a center entrance and a oriel window, both later additions. Fenestration includes modern, thermal 6/1 and 1/1 double-hung sash.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

Incorporated as Nauset Plantation in 1646, and changed to Eastham in 1651, Eastham territory originally extended south to Pleasant Bay and north beyond Wellfleet Harbor. The early development pattern for what we now know as Eastham was impacted by its absence of deep-water harbor facilities. Relatively fertile soil led to dispersed agricultural settlement, but residential and commercial development was concentrated to the north at Wellfleet Harbor and to the south at Town Cove and Pleasant Bay. When the separate towns of Wellfleet and Orleans were created in the late-18th century, Eastham became and remained one of the least populated towns on the Cape throughout the 19th century.

In the 19th century, Eastham was the agricultural center of the Outer Cape. Crops evolved over time; corn and dairy were surpassed in the early-20th century by asparagus and turnips - two crops well suited for the sandy soil. In 1900, 58% of Eastham's workers were employed as farmers, but by 1930 that number had dwindled to 21%. Summer resort development, including cottage colonies and subdivisions of former farmland that would transform Eastham, had begun in earnest in the 1920s as middle-class access to car ownership increased and Cape roads were improved.

(Edited and expanded from 2020 version of the Form B for this property, 1 Preservation Way, which mistakenly identified this building as the main house.)

Title research tracks back to a 1838 deed where Joseph and Lurana Smith of Eastham sold a five-acre parcel at the intersection of the County and Nauset Roads that included this land.¹ That deed referenced a dwelling house that likely refers to 3070 State Highway (EAS.1326). There are two deeds wherein Joseph Smith, a farmer, bought land in Eastham, but neither appears to conform to or include this land, so it is unclear when he purchased this land or when he built the house. Joseph (1797-1880) and Lurana (b. 1809) Smith may have built the house, and possibly this barn, soon after their marriage.

Of all the Smiths in Eastham, this Joseph Smith is among the most obscure. The deed is signed by him and his wife Lurania H. Smith. Lurania Higgins Steel was born in Winchester, NH, to the Rev. Joel Steel and his wife Jerusha Rich Higgins, the latter of whom was a native of Wellfleet. In Eastham in 1831, she married Joseph Smith, and though no deed has been located that transferred property to him, he probably built the house that is now 3070 State Highway at the time of his marriage. It is highly likely that the five-acre parcel was farmed, which could mean that this former barn also dates to the 1830s. The couple had two sons in Eastham, George W. in 1835 and Joseph W. in 1837. By 1840, the family had moved to Natick, where Joseph Smith, a clock maker, died of consumption in 1847. His birthplace is listed as Eastham, but his parents' names were left blank.²

¹ Book 8/ Page 210.

² The Smiths had two more children in Natick, Maria Curtis in 1840 and Frances Ella in 1845. In 1850 the widowed Lurania Smith lived with her four children, her mother Jerusha R. Steel, and boarders in Natick. In 1859 son Joseph W., an upholsterer, married Maria Menard in Boston,

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The Smiths sold the house (and possibly the barn) and five acres in 1838 to James G. Smith, merchant from Dennis, and George Ward of Wellfleet. They may have bought this house as an investment. James Smith appears to have sold his interest to George Ward. It was George alone in 1847, described as a gentleman still living in Wellfleet, who sold this property to Reuben Brewer, mariner.³

Reuben Brewer (1815-1904) may have been renting the house before buying it; he was listed in this neighborhood in the 1840 Eastham census with two persons in his household. Brewer was one of the five children of North Carolina-native Edward Brewer (ca 1780-1820) and his wife Mehitabel Mayo Brewer (1784-1864). Reuben Brewer was a mariner when he married Ruth Snow of Orleans early in 1847, and that marriage may have prompted the decision to buy this house. By 1850, the couple were listed with \$406 in real property in a household with two-year-old daughter Almena Lewis Brewer (born in 1848 and shown in the 1850 census as Emma) and Brewer's mother. In 1859, son Luther Wilber was born. In 1865, Ruth Snow Brewer died of typhoid, and from 1865 through 1880, the household included Reuben, by 1870 a fisherman, Almena, and Luther, who by 1880 was an apprentice to a harness maker.

In 1882, daughter Almena had a daughter, Blanche Allen, in Brockton (the birth is also listed in Eastham); the father is listed as John W. Brewer, of whom little has been learned; but he was never part of the Eastham Brewer household. By 1900, son Luther had left the household, Reuben Brewer was farming, daughter Almena was a laundress, and granddaughter Blanche was eighteen. In 1902, the town taxed (but exempted) Brewer for a house valued at \$450, a barn at \$50, a shop at \$40, a woodhouse at \$20, and a henhouse at \$40, and an unspecified amount of land. Reuben Brewer died in July 1904, and in November of the same year the *Barnstable Patriot* reported that Almena and Blanche "have closed their house and gone to Brockton for the winter."

In 1905, Almena rented her father's house for the summer, but she and her daughter were back in Eastham in the fall, when Blanche was one of several Eastham young women who had picked cranberries on the "Brett Bog."⁴ Through the 1910s, she apparently continued to rent the house at 3070 State Highway, as Cape newspapers reported her visits to her cousin Bertha and Bertha's husband William B. Higgins, and sometimes kept house for them.⁵ An undated postcard in the Eastham Historical Society documents that she ran the house as the "Hotel Almena." An early-20th century view of State Highway shows the house in the background, and shows its context across from the former Town Hall, 55 Salt Pond Road, EAS.112 (Photo 4).

In 1907, Blanche Brewer, then working as a stitcher at a Brockton shoe factory, married Joseph L. Keefe, a shoe shop cutter born in Boston and living in Brockton. In 1910, they were living in Brockton with one-year-old daughter Bertha Ellen Keefe and Blanche's mother Almena, who was working as a housekeeper. In 1915, Joseph Keefe, reportedly despondent at losing his job, took his life, and by 1920 Almena, Blanche, and her daughter Bertha had returned to 3070 State Highway. In that year Almena was doing laundry from home, and Blanche worked as a boardinghouse waitress. In 1926, Eastham taxed Brewer on a house valued at \$1150, a barn and shed at \$230, a shop at \$115, and 16 acres.

Bertha A. Keefe graduated from Orleans High School in 1927 and went to Hyannis Normal School. By January 1930, she was an assistant in the Eastham school when she began to work with Ellyn Gross, who had recently married and intended to resign within the month. Gross taught first-graders, and Bertha Keefe taught first- and second-graders in Orleans through at least 1941. In 1930 she, her mother Blanche, by then also teaching school, and her grandmother were living in the State Highway house. In 1937, the town taxed Almena Brewer on a house assessed at \$1200, a barn/shed at \$230, a shop at \$120, a 3.6-acre homestead lot, and 5.4 acres of woodland. In 1940, Brewer was ninety-one years old and living at 3070 State Highway with daughter Blanche, by then a town librarian, and granddaughter Bertha.

Almena Lewis Brewer died in 1941, and in 1966, Bertha Keefe registered the land in Land Court and recorded a plan (Figure 2).⁶ She divided her property into five lots in 1984, with the house and barn both on Lot 1, and then subdivided Lot 1 in 1987 into Lots

and by 1860 and 1865 most of the family is listed in Boston, with between two and six boarders; Jerusha Steel was part of the household in both censuses. Lurania Steel Smith died in Boston in 1883.

³ Barnstable County Registry of Deeds, Book 41/ Page 356.

⁴ "Eastham," *Barnstable Patriot*, 28 November 1904, 4; 24 July 1905, 4; and 30 October 1905.

⁵ See, for example, "North Eastham," *Barnstable Patriot*, 7 September 1914, 3. Bertha Howard Brewer (1879-1933) was the daughter of Jesse E. and Rosaltha Ellis Brewer and granddaughter of Edward Brewer (1809-81), Reuben Brewer's brother.

⁶ Certificate of Title 40903, Land Court Plan 34450-A.

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6 and 7 (Figures 3, 4).⁷ In 1986, a year after her death, the executor of Bertha Keefe's will sold this former barn at 1 Preservation Way, now on Lot 6, to Florence H. and Michael and Andras of Easton, CT.⁸ The Andrases owned the property for a decade and sold it, after Michael Andras's death, to Sarah S. Dinsmore of North Truro.⁹ Dinsmore sold this property in 1999 to Lisa A. Whelan-Cavanaugh of Wellfleet, but she lost the property through a mortgage foreclosure.¹⁰ In 2008, a successor bank sold it to Eliza Fitts of Eastham and Kenneth Kozak of Wellfleet. Eliza Fitts now owns the former barn on her own.¹¹

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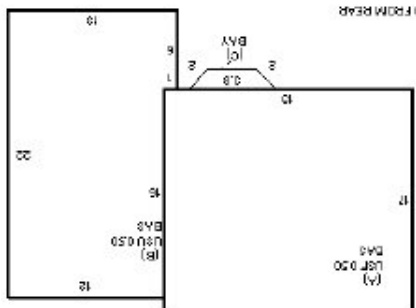


Figure 1. Assessor Sketch.



Photo 2. View looking northeast.

⁷ Subdivision Plan of Land in Eastham, Land Court Plan 34450-B, C.

⁸ Certificate of Title 108806.

⁹ Certificate of Title 141797, Dinsmore also bought 3070 State Highway in a separate sale).

¹⁰ Certificate of Title 185595.

¹¹ Certificates of Title 186047, 201387.

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Photo 3. View looking east.



Photo 4. View looking southwest.

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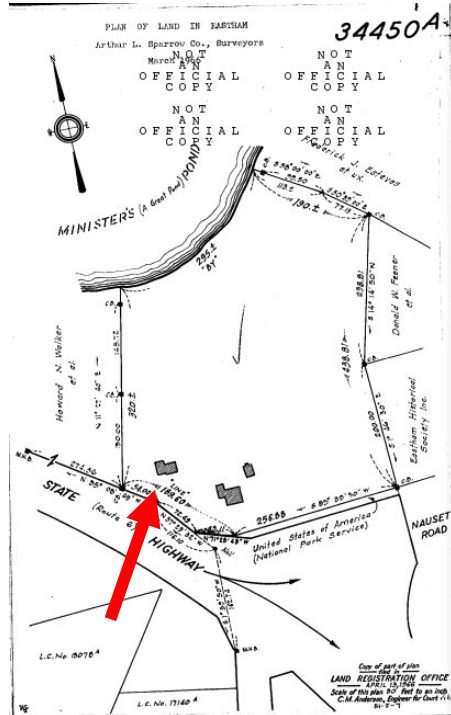


Figure 2. LCP 34450-A, 1966.
(Arrows to former barn added.)

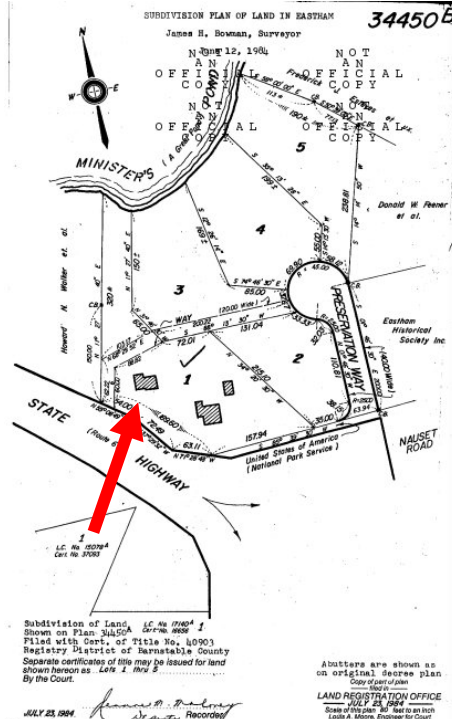


Figure 3. LCP 34450-B, 1984.

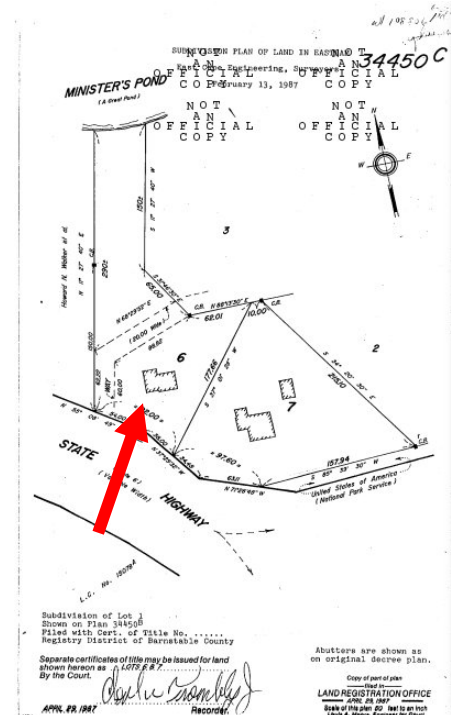


Figure 4. LCP 34450-C, 1987.